

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Lost Buildings of Old Rutland Revisited: A Calendar



RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The demolition of the Brock House in Rutland began in April 1990.
This building stood just south of Christ the King Church.*

Introduction

The architectural legacy of the area known as "Old Rutland Town" is a rich one. The contemporary communities of Proctor, Rutland City, Rutland Town and West Rutland which now make up "Old Rutland" continue to possess numerous buildings — churches, residences, civic and commercial structures — of which they can be proud. In the case of Rutland City, the past three decades have seen the restoration of most of the original downtown facades, creating one of the state's finest 19th Century townscapes. In an age of "big boxes" and a landscape littered with prefabricated commercial structures, the public is concerned more than ever with preserving the dignity and craftsmanship of the past.

Yet many buildings in "Old Rutland" have been lost over the years. That they are no longer here is not so much a matter of neglect or insensitivity as of calamity and changing ways of life. Sometimes buildings outlive their usefulness and are impractical to maintain. Sometimes a carelessly tossed cigarette or a faulty electrical connection can spell the demise of a structure housing a century of memories. Each of the twelve buildings in the calendar has its own story to tell. While there is a nostalgia connected with their loss, time does march on and when a building loses its reason for being, its days may be numbered.

About the Author

Jacob Sherman is reference and technical services librarian at the Rutland Free Library. He is also Secretary of the Rutland Historical Society and Chairman of its Publications Committee. His most recent contribution to the Society's publications was "Lost Buildings of Old Rutland: A Calendar," *Rutland Historical Society Quarterly* (Vol. 33 No. 4).

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Lost Buildings of Old Rutland

Revisited: A Calendar

By Jacob Sherman

January - In 1788 Eleazer Wheelock, a Revolutionary War soldier, built the Brock House just south of where Christ the King Church on South Main Street stands today. For most of its history, the Brock House was an inn serving the Boston to Montreal stage route. In its last few decades it was owned by Christ the King Church and served as a convent. The beginning of the end came in the form of a short circuit in a second floor bathroom. The "crackling" resulted in the fire department being called out and the city building inspector ruling that the wiring woes necessitated the closing of the building and the evacuation of its eight residents including six nuns. Church officials noted that the \$400,000 required for needed repairs could better be spent elsewhere. A citizens group sought to save the building by persuading the board of aldermen to rescind the demolition permit, but the city attorney ruled the board had no authority even to hear the appeal. In April 1990 the demolition of the Brock House began.

February - In the 1850s sizeable numbers of French Canadians began migrating to the area, mostly to work in the marble quarries. In 1868 when the mostly Irish workforce in the quarries went out on strike for higher wages, the Rutland Marble Company responded by bringing in about 60 French Canadians to replace the strikers. Resentment and even some violence resulted. Made to feel unwelcome at St. Bridget's Irish Catholic Church, the French Canadian community sought to have its own church. Bishop Louis de Goesbriand provided French-speaking priests and a church was completed in July 1870. The new structure was located in the Slason and Sheldon Streets area near both the quarries and the humble houses of the parishioners. By 1882 the new church was deemed too large, so in that year a more modest church was erected on Main Street and the old one demolished. By 1981 declining membership and rising operating costs spelled the end for West Rutland's Sacred Heart of Jesus Church that had now become a mission church. After nearly 100 years of service the structure was salvaged piece by piece thanks to the efforts of two young men who believed that quality workmanship should live on elsewhere.

March – The Rutland Bicycle Club skating rink had its grand opening on 4 July 1884. The rink was one of the largest in New England, comparing favorably with those being built in the largest cities. The entire building was 174 feet by 97 feet and it had a seating capacity of 1200, 800 on the main floor and 400 in the balcony. The skating area itself measured 140 feet by 77 feet and featured a double floor of matched hard maple under which was a layer of pine. The building stood at the southeast corner of Church Street and Kendall Avenue. The rink was the brainchild of the Rutland Bicycle Club, many of whose members were the sons of the city's elite families. They raised the \$15,000 construction cost including \$1,000 for the tinning of the roof. The grand opening drew hundreds of people who warmly responded to demonstrations of fancy roller skating and expert bicycling, not to mention their own turns around the rink under the illumination of numerous chandeliers, each possessing 30 gas jets. The fanciful facility was, alas, to have a short life. The Rutland Bicycle Club Skating Rink Association became insolvent in the fall of 1885. Later the building housed a shirt factory and was also used as a warehouse by the Marble City Electric Light Company. By the beginning of the 20th Century it had given way to a number of small homes.

April – One of the prominent businesses serving the Center Rutland village was a grocery and dry goods store operated by Louis Rosen in the building at Shedd's Corner, on the north-east corner of the intersection of Route 4 and the Proctor Road. In those pre-Social Security days, retirement was rarely an option, and Louis, according to the recollections of Clara Rosen Eisen, "conducted his business until he died at age 92." Louis had emigrated from Lithuania just before the turn of the century and prior to coming to Center Rutland worked as a "shochet" or ritual Jewish butcher in Montpelier. Louis' brother Abraham, Mrs. Eisen's grandfather, followed him from Lithuania to Center Rutland in 1901 and took up work as a dry goods peddler, carrying his wares on his back through Proctor, Pittsford, West Rutland, Ira and Tinmouth. Louis Rosen operated and lived above his store from 1903 until about 1934.

May – The Colonial Theater was one of numerous theaters in town showing silent moving pictures during the years prior to World War I. It stood at the northwest corner of West and Cottage Streets and was probably constructed in 1908. B.D. Fuller and P.H. Lyons were the early proprietors of the

theatre. By 1911 the premises included Arthur W. Daley's Colonial Bowling Alleys. In 1913 T. W. McKay was operating the Colonial Cigar Store in a side area of the building. On 5 April 1916 the building was sold for \$20,250 to the Rutland Machine & Automobile Company to be used as an auto garage. This brought to an end the building's life as a theater. In 1938 it was sold to John Valente. Over the years, the building housed a Buick dealership, candlepin and 10-pin bowling alleys, Louis Pokrywka's pool hall, an A&P grocery store, Morello's barbershop and The Hair Artists. For many its most memorable tenant was "The Carriage Room," a bar-restaurant owned and operated from 1964 to its demise by Valente's daughter Carol and her husband Robert Liscinsky. In its heyday the establishment attracted a fanatically loyal clientele of local lawyers, businessmen and politicians. Rutland attorney J. Fred Carbine was quoted as saying: "More lawsuits were resolved here and business deals made than in any office or courtroom in town." Other regulars included the Nuts and Bolts Club of MSJ football fans who invariably gathered after the game. In 1988 the Proctor Bank bought the building and had it razed for a parking lot. The last Sunday menu of Italian specialties was served on 27 November 1988.

June - Cooney's Boarding House housed many of the single workers of the marble industry. It was only one of many boarding houses which served the needs of the numerous laborers, both native and immigrant, that filled the Proctor community. Cooney's was located on the site of the recent Sutherland Club. The building to the right was the old library.

July - A stone marker at the northeast corner of Main and Terrill Streets marks the spot where once stood Fort Rutland. Constructed of maple pickets sunk five feet into the ground and rising 14 feet high, it reflected the rough-hewn frontier spirit of a new town, barely in its infancy and struggling for survival. The fort was built during the first half of 1776, a time when fears of British invasion from the north were running high and depredations by Indians and Tories were always a possibility. It is not recorded what soldiers were stationed there or if at any point townsfolk sought refuge within its confines. The fort was oblong in shape and stretched 165 feet north and south and 132 feet east to west. The interior contained a well as well as a small building used for stockpiling ammunition and provisions. Entry was through a gate on the west side while at each of the four corners stood an eight-foot square redoubt. Portholes, just large enough for muskets,

were spaced six feet apart. The fate of the fort is uncertain: was it burned by the inhabitants in 1777 before they fled the invading forces of General Burgoyne, or did it fall prey to the elements and those such as Picket John who carried off the pickets for firewood? Today an empty service station, a laundromat and a supermarket occupy the space where Fort Rutland once stood.

August – Thomas Costa's grocery store was located on the north side of Main Street at the intersection with Clarendon Avenue, a site later occupied by a Grand Union Store. In the days before the big supermarket chains, Thomas Costa kept West Rutland supplied with delicious edibles. His advertisement in the 1913 city directory touted him as a "dealer in fine fruit, confectionery, groceries, cigars, and Italian products." Ice cream sodas were another specialty of the establishment. Partially occupying the building's second floor was an "attorney and counselor at law," Learned R. Noble. It appears that the building was constructed just prior to 1913. The building was destroyed by fire at an unknown date.

September – On 28 June 1923 construction began on a mammoth automobile building at the northeast corner of the fairgrounds. When local contractor Charles G. Noyes had completed the job in late August of 1923 it boasted the largest floor space of any structure in Vermont. The building bordered 200 feet on Park Street and 70 feet on South Main Street. For the next eight years autos were stored there winter and summer and at fair time it became a gigantic showroom for the latest models. In late 1930 the Tom Thumb Miniature Golf Course became the new occupant of the building. To conserve heat, a dropped ceiling constructed of paper was suspended over the golfing area. About 4:00 a.m. on the night of 29 April 1931 a fire broke out and within an hour consumed the building with a loss estimated at \$40,000. Damp weather prevented sparks from igniting homes in the area. Overshadowing the loss of the building was the tragic death of CVPS lineman Leo Hutchins who later in the day was electrocuted atop a utility pole while trying to disconnect live wires. Fair officials decided not to rebuild the building.

October – The Crown Point Road linking Fort No. 4 in New Hampshire and Crown Point passed through the village of Center Rutland. It was here in the spring of 1778 that the new Republic of Vermont decided to base the headquarters of its state troops, choosing a site near Mead's Falls on Otter Creek

on land owned by Rutland's first settler, James Mead. The new Fort Ranger was oval-shaped, enclosing an area of at least two acres and was designed to provide quarters for up to 300 soldiers. Sharpened pickets made from hemlock logs stood 15 feet high and were reinforced by eight-foot logs. However, only a single nine-pound cannon was available to protect the fort. Officers slept in barracks built against the north wall while soldiers occupied barracks in the southern portion. The area between served as a parade ground. The purpose of the fort was to check British military activities emanating from Canada or Fort Ticonderoga.

November - On 1 March 1906 the old brick electric light station located on the south side of West Street just west of the East Creek bridge became the first garage of the Rutland Machine & Automobile Company. This company was the first auto garage in Rutland. The company was formed by the merger of the Clark and Matthews Company with the Coolidge Cycle Company. Less than a year later the company had moved to larger quarters at 55-61 Wales Street in buildings that previously had been occupied by a blacksmith shop and a liquor saloon. Ten years later it again moved, this time to West Street, purchasing the old Colonial Theater building on 5 April 1916 for \$20,500. The old electric light station became a laundry for a number of years. Today nothing remains of the building.

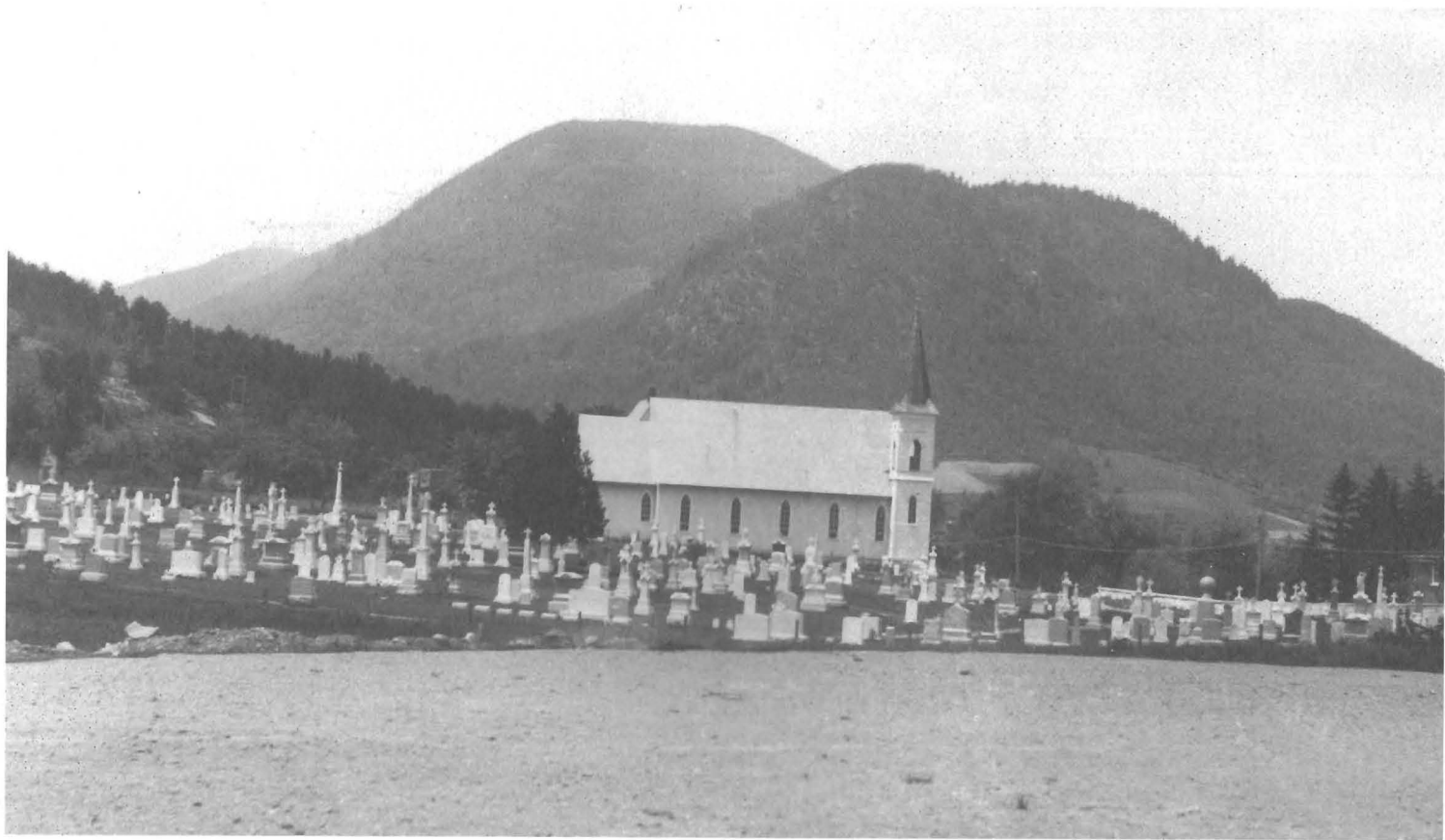
December - The Proctor Company Store was erected in 1872 on the foundations of an earlier store that had burned. Located on the north side of the village square, the store offered at first mostly basic staples plus a few dry goods. By 1882 an expansion had taken place, creating a 100-foot by 50-foot addition. Later years brought the addition of a 72-foot by 50-foot west wing that housed a furniture division and a tin shop. The Odd Fellows Hall and the town library occupied the second floor while the Garon barbershop and the post office found quarters in the basement. In 1903 the store became a cooperative in that employees could share in the store's profits. On the night of 11 November 1913, this store, that had served the Proctor community for over 40 years, burned to the ground. A bigger, better and more centrally located store, built of brick and marble, replaced it.



The Brock House on South Main Street in Rutland was built in 1788. For most of its history it was a public hostelry located on the Boston to Montreal stage route. For many of its last years it was a convent for a small number of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

JANUARY 2005

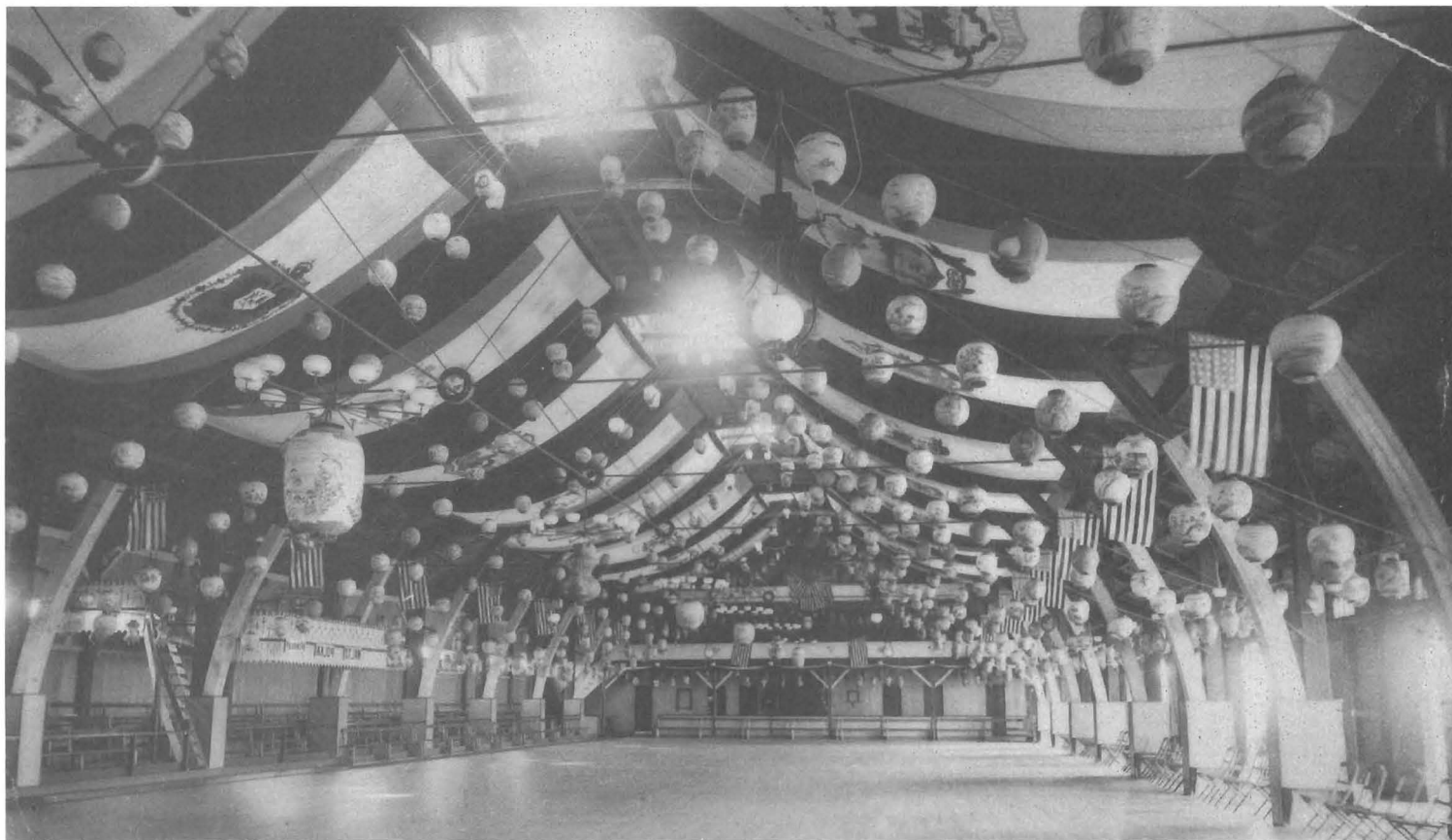
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 New Year's Day
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	18	19	20	21	22
23 30	24 31	25	26	27	28	29



Sacred Heart of Jesus Church on Main Street in West Rutland replaced the first French Catholic church there. It was built in 1882. After nearly one hundred years the building was no longer used. Fortunately it was carefully disassembled.

FEBRUARY 2005

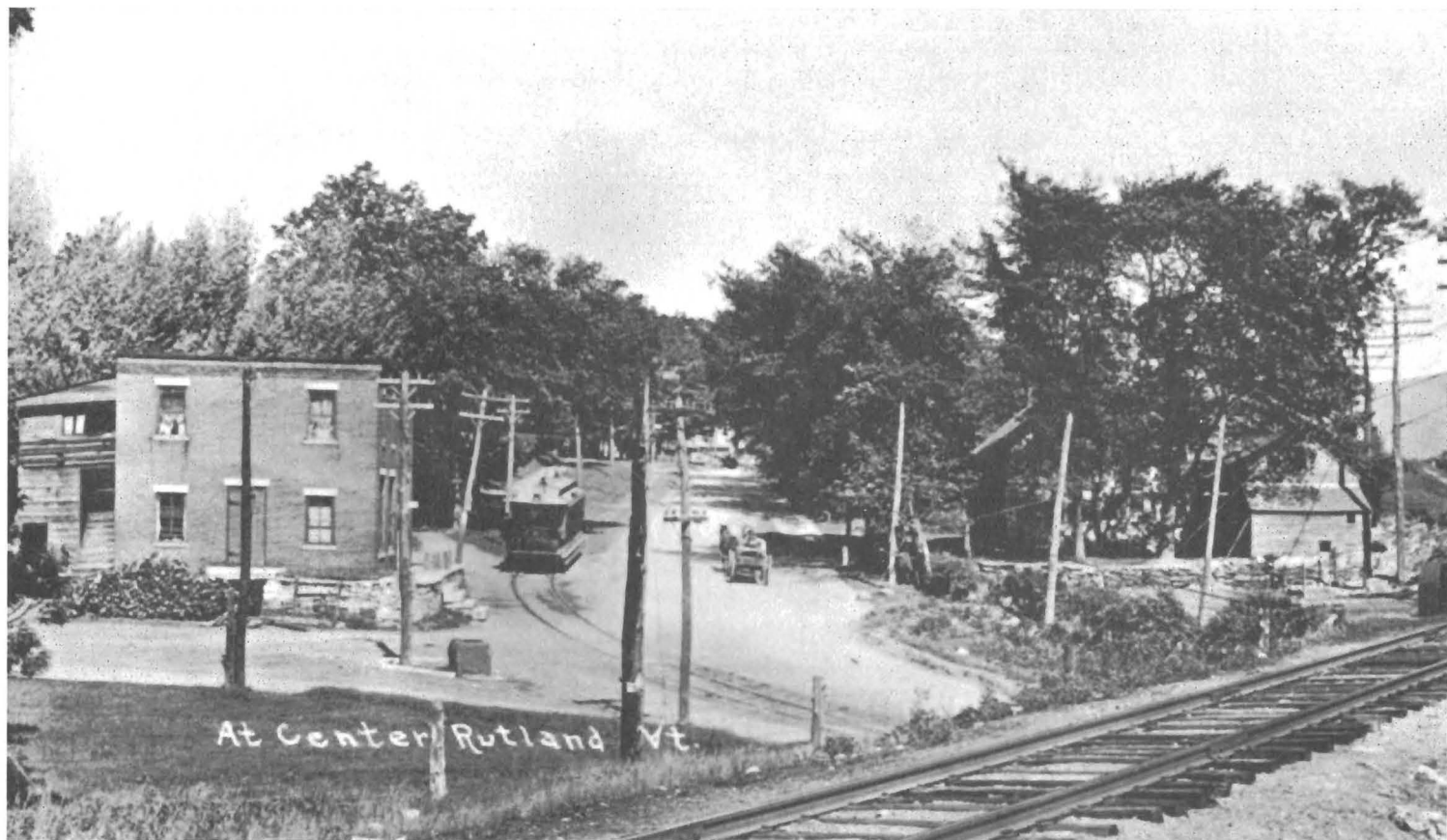
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Ash Wednesday	10	11	12 Lincoln's Birthday
13	14 Valentine's Day	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 President's Day	22 Washington's Traditional Birthday	23	24	25	26
27	28					



The Rutland Bicycle Club roller skating rink that was opened on 4 July 1884 was a very large and popular entertainment site at the southeast corner of Kendall Avenue and Church Street. The unfortunate insolvency of the rink association led to the ultimate demise of the facility within a decade.

MARCH 2005

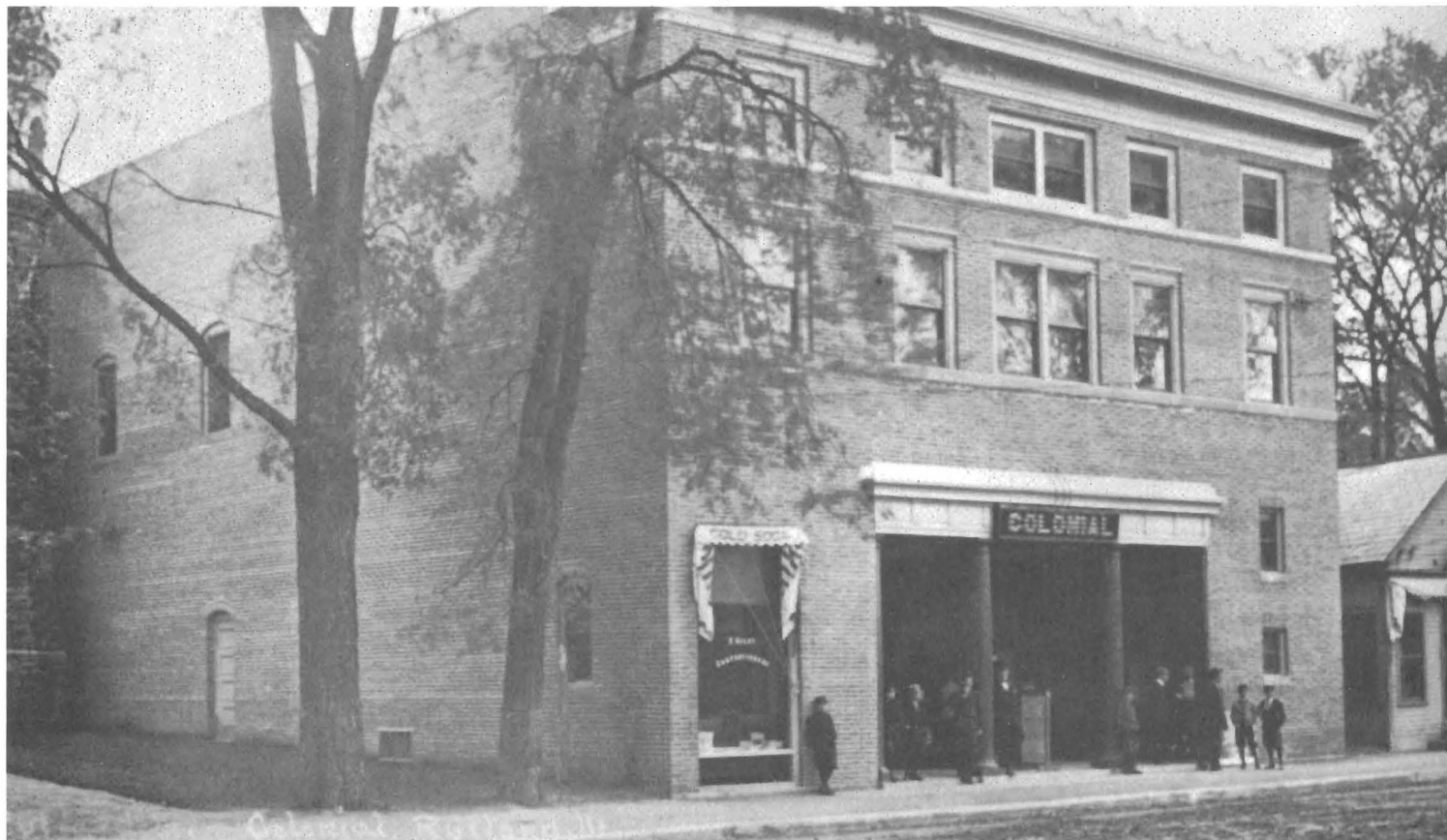
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
				St. Patrick's Day		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Palm Sunday					Good Friday	
27	28	29	30	31		
Easter						



Louis Rosen's grocery and dry goods store at Shedd's Corner at the intersection of the Proctor Road and Route 4 gave Center Rutland an important business outlet. It became a landmark for the commercial role of the Jewish immigrant.

APRIL 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 Daylight Savings Begins	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 Passover	25	26	27	28	29	30



The Colonial Theater was one of Rutland's early 20th Century silent movie theaters. By 1916 the building took on new and different uses, the last of which was by "The Carriage Room". In 1988 the building was demolished for a parking lot.

MAY 2005

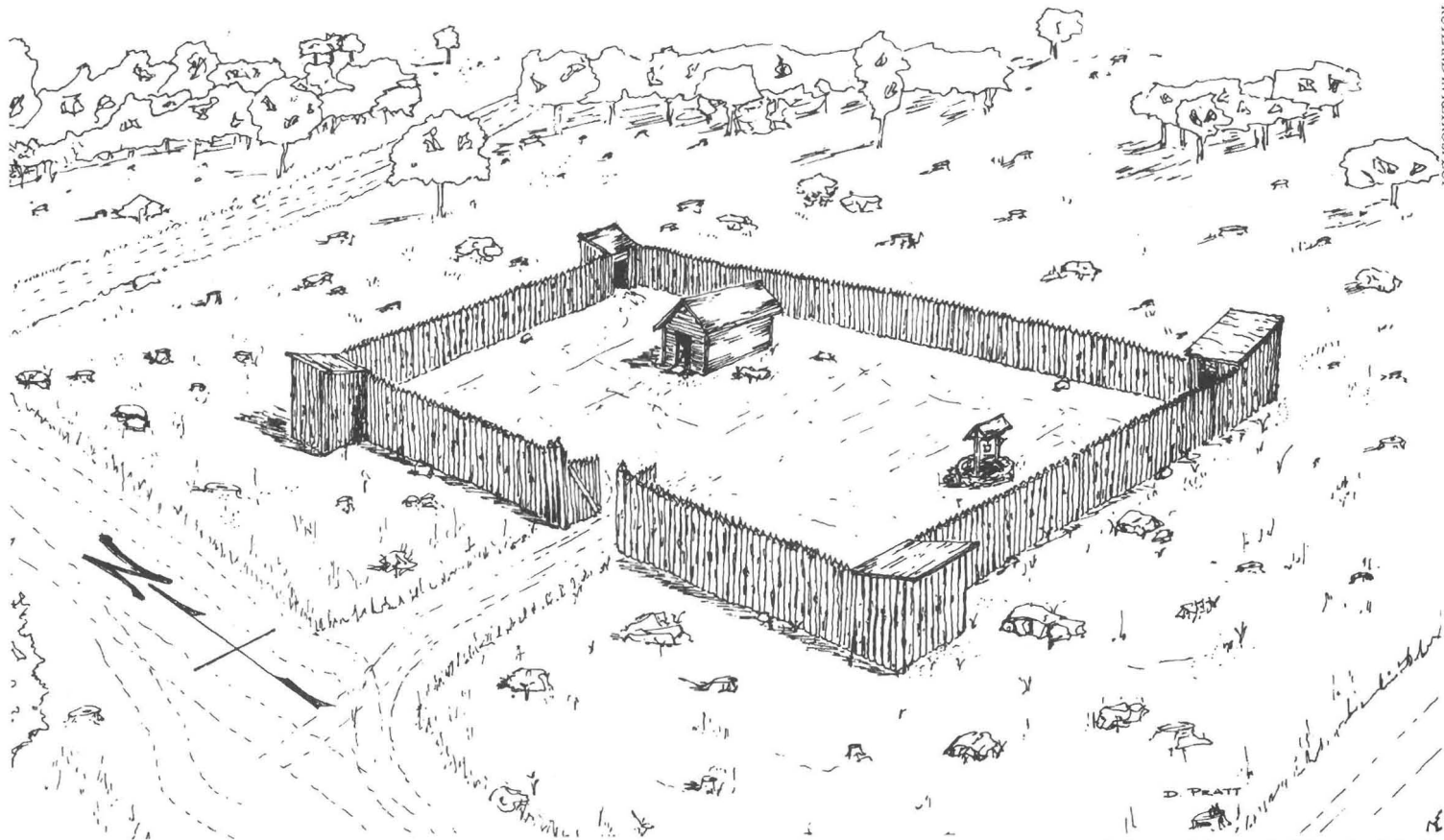
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 Mother's Day	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Armed Forces Day
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30 Memorial Day	31				



Cooney's Boarding House was one of the many immigrant boarding houses in Proctor. Cooney's was particularly noted as a house for single male workers. It was located on the site of the former Sutherland Club.

JUNE 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14 Flag Day	15	16	17	18
19 Father's Day	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



Fort Rutland was Rutland's first fort. It was located on the northeast corner of Terrill and North Main Streets. It was built early in the American Revolution but had a short life. There are numerous tales of what happened to it.

JULY 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4 Independence Day	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30



The Costa grocery store was located on the north side of Main Street in West Rutland, just opposite the entrance of Clarendon Avenue. In the early 20th Century this store was a major shopping location for the folks in West Rutland.

AUGUST 2005

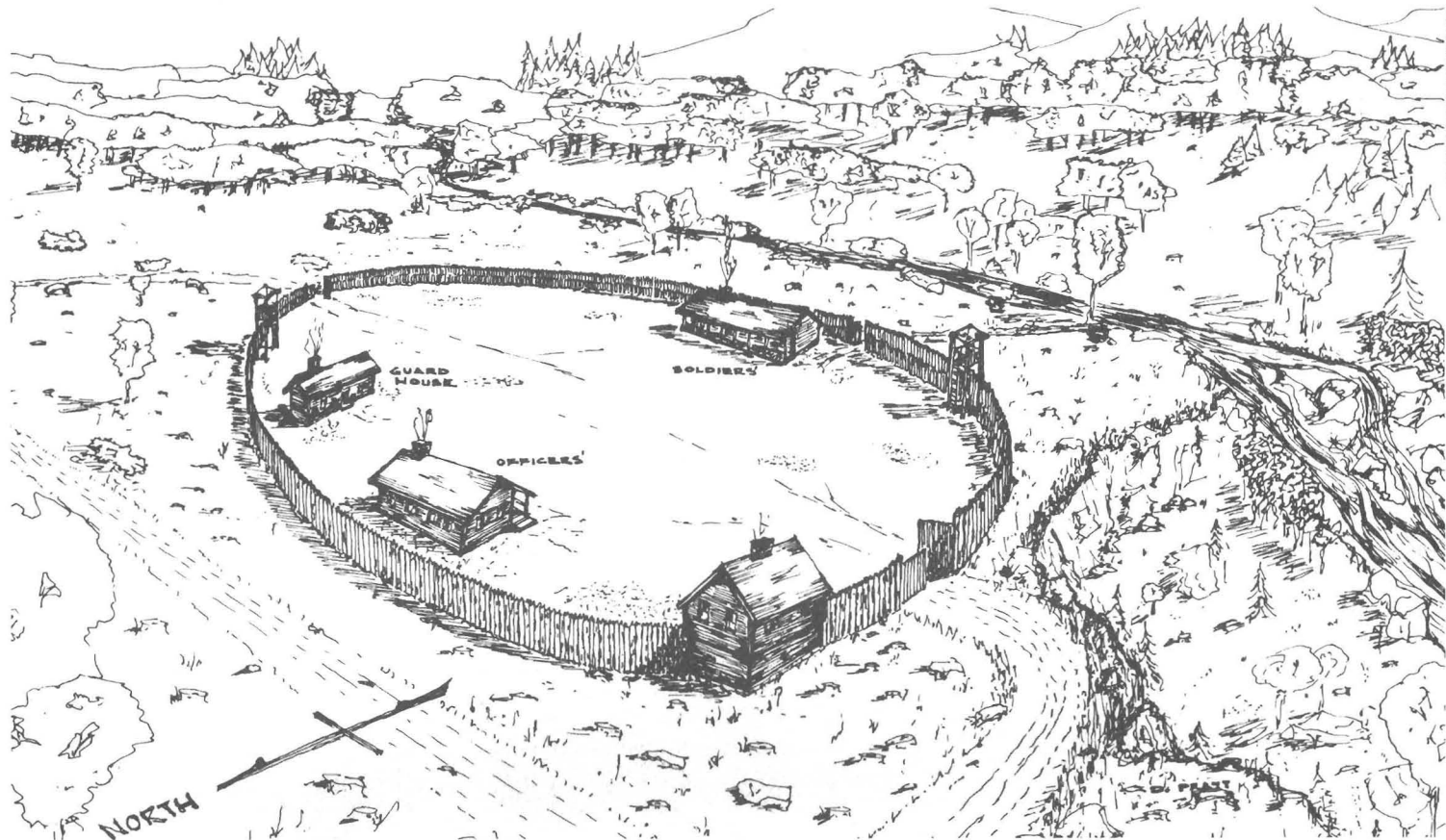
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



The automobile building at the Rutland fairgrounds was built in 1923. At that time it provided the largest floor space of any structure in Vermont. In late 1930 this miniature golf course was constructed in the building. On 29 April 1931 the building burned. It was not replaced by the Rutland Fair.

SEPTEMBER 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



Fort Ranger was built in 1778 in Center Rutland as the Vermont Military Headquarters. The boundaries of the fort went from the present cemetery on the east to the dropping of the land on the west. On the north it was bounded by Route 4 and went south until the land dropped to reach the Otter Creek.

OCTOBER 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4 Rosh Hashanah	5	6	7	8
9	10 Columbus Day	11	12	13 Yom Kippur	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 Daylight Savings Ends	24 Halloween	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



The Rutland Machine & Automobile Company operated Rutland's first auto garage. Its first building was located in the old brick electric light station on the south side of West Street just west of the East Creek Bridge.

NOVEMBER 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11 Veteran's Day	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24 Thanksgiving Day	25	26
27	28	29	30			



The Proctor Company Store was built in 1872 on the north side of the village square. In 1903 it became a cooperative store. It burned on 11 November 1913.

DECEMBER 2005

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Christmas Day Hanukkah						New Year's Eve



Flames engulfed the Proctor Cooperative Store on the evening of 11 November 1913. A brick and marble building that stands today replaced this store that was central to life in Proctor.

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